

Message Text

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22

ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 SSO-00 VO-03 SCA-01

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----- 019559

O R 271055Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2637

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 24122

FOR: D/HA/ORM

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF

SUBJ: INDOCHINESE BOAT CASE: PLAN TO SAIL TO AUSTRALIA

REF: STATE 205525

1. (CONFIDENTIAL) SONGKHLA 0194 IS REPEATED BELOW: QUOTE

A. CONSULATE HAS LEARNED THAT APPROXIMATELY SIXTY BOAT REFUGEES
IN THE SONGKHLA CAMP ARE PLANNING TO SET SAIL FOR AUSTRALIA
IN ONE OF THE LARGER BOATS IN WHICH AN EARLIER GROUP OF REFUGEES
ARRIVED HERE.

B. REFUGEES ARE NOW TRYING TO REPAIR THE BOAT AND PURCHASE FUEL.
WE UNDERSTAND THAT MOST OF THESE SIXTY REFUGEES HAVE APPLIED
TO GO TO HOLLAND, AUSTRALIA, AND FRANCE. THEY HAVE BECOME
DISCOURAGED AT LONG WAIT AND THUS REACHED DECISION TO SET SAIL
ON THEIR OWN. THEY REPORTEDLY PLAN TO DEPART IN ANOTHER WEEK
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OR SO WHEN REPAIRS ARE COMPLETED.

C. SUCH A VOYAGE IS OBVIOUSLY FRAUGHT WITH DANGER. TWO REFUGEES IN THE CAMP WITH NAVIGATION AND NAVAL EXPERIENCE HAVE OPINED THAT THE BOAT WILL NEVER MAKE IT ALL THE WAY TO AUSTRALIA.

D. EMBASSY MAY WISH TO PASS THIS INFORMATION TO UNHCR.
UNQUOTE

2. (UNCLASSIFIED) COMMENT: UNHCR/BANGKOK HAS BEEN INFORMED OF THE PROPOSED TRIP OF THESE REFUGEES. DESPITE THIS APPROACH, UNHCR TAKES THE POSITION THAT, THEY CANNOT TAKE ANY OVERT ACTION TO PREVENT THE BOATS' DEPARTURE. THE UNHCR CANNOT APPROACH THE RTG AND DEMAND THAT THE REFUGEES BE ALLOWED TO STAY, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT RPT NOT BEING FORCED OUT, ALTHOUGH THE THAI WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE THEM GO. THE UNHCR CANNOT ORDER THE REFUGEES NOT TO TRAVEL, AND CANNOT MAKE ANY PRIMISES CONCERNING THIRD COUNTRY RESETTLEMENT. THE REFUGEES HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF EMBASSIES COME TO INTERVIEW, BUT, OTHER THAN US., FRENCH, AND DUTCH LISTS, NO ONE HAS BEEN ACCEPTED TO ANOTHER COUNTRY. NOTE, OF 550 PLUS PEOPLE, THE U.S. ACCEPTED ABOUT 187, THE FRENCH 20, AND POSSIBLY 50 BY THE DUTCH. OF THE REMAINING 300, OVER HALF HAVE ARRIVED SINCE 30 JUNE 1976. THESE PEOPLE, THE NEW CASES, AND THE ONES PREVIOUSLY REJECTED, KNOW THAT THE U.S. PROGRAM IS, ESSENTIALLY COMPLETE AND THAT, OTHER THAN THE CURRENT FRENCH PROGRAM, THERE IS LITTLE ACTION FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. (BELGIUM HAS RECENTLY EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE APPEAL). THIS GROUP OF 60, GATHERED FROM DIFFERENT BOATS, SEEM TO SEE THIS JOURNEY AS THEIR ONLY CHANCE FOR RESETTLEMENT OUT OF THAILAND, BUT, TO REPEAT, THAILAND IS NOT DEPORTING THEM. THESE REFUGEES ARE MAKING THIS DECISION, HOWEVER ILLADVISED, ON THEIR OWN. IT NOW REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THEY WILL FOLLOW THROUGH.

3. (UNCLASSIFIED) WHILE DRAFTING THIS CABLE, AMCONSUL SONGKHLA CALLED WITH THE INFO THAT ANOTHER BOAT ARRIVED WITH 26 REFUGEES ON BOARD. THIS MAKES A TOTAL OF 337 NEW BOAT REFUGEES SINCE 30 JUNE ARRIVING AT VARIOUS PORTS IN THAILAND, OF WHICH APPROXIMATELY 120 APPEAR TO QUALIFY UNDER THE OLD EPP CRITERIA. THE COMMENTS OF REFTTEL, PARA 3, CERTAINLY APPLY.
BURKE

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